

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter. I have read that Sinclair's upper management considers the anti-Kerry documentary to be "news," and that it is this film's status as "news," that is its rationale for "mandating" its broadcast. So be it. But if the 35+-year-old gripes of disaffected Vietnam POWs, who have somehow been convinced that Kerry(!) is responsible for their pain is news, then so are the very, very, very current gripes of the parents, widows, and widowers of slain service personnel in Iraq, who have many questions for Mr. Bush and for others in his Administration; most particularly, this question: why did my loved one have to die when Hussain was so manifestly not a threat?

Should Sinclair stations allow equal air time to those with questions for Mr. Bush, then by all means air the anti-Kerry piece.

BUT ONLY UNDER THOSE CONDITIONS.

OTHERWISE, SINCLAIR MUST BE ACCOUNTED A CONDUIT FOR PROPAGANDA AND, AS SUCH, IS NOT A FIT STEWARD OF THE PUBLIC'S AIRWAVES.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.